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HINTS TO FARMERS

ON THE

CULTURE

OF

POTATOES.



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LEVENS, NEAR ROSTREVOR.



NEWRY:

PRINTED BY ALEXANDER WILKINSON,

TELEGRAPH-OFFICE.

—
1813.

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TO THE
FARMERS
OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM.

GENTLEMEN,

I BEG to submit to your consideration, the enclosed paper, on the culture of potatoes. It is the result of repeated experiments; and I feel great pleasure in having it in my power to assure you of its success.

The manure to be drawn on the stubble as it is made, fresh from the farmyard, from the time the corn is cleared

off the ground, until the first of February; each week's drawing to be spread and ploughed in, as deep as the soil will permit.* From the first of February to the first of April, plant a portion of the prepared ground each week. Harrow the ground fine; plough it over about four inches deep, having two men to attend each plough, to drop the seed in every fourth furrow, which will place the potatoes in drills, twenty-eight inches asunder. Three weeks after each division is put in, run the seed-harrow, with three-inch teeth, to destroy the present,

* By this means, the dung is put out in the most proper state (which has been clearly proved by the most enlightened chymists and farmers), and by deep ploughing, is placed out of the reach of all flies and other insects depositing their eggs, to the future destruction of crop, as well as from the influence of the sun and air, and buried along with the grass, weeds and stubble, [which, destroying the two former, will increase the fermentation, to the benefit of the land. The ground is left rough and hollow, to get the full benefit of sun, rain, air, frost and snow, to the destruction of roots, vermin, weeds, and strong clods.

and increase the future growth of weeds.*

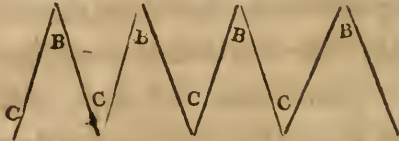
When the potato tops rise sufficiently to mark the drills, run the drill-harrow, to cut up all weeds, and make the mould fine enough for the double mould-board plough to land them up with. This operation should be performed every ten days, as long as you can raise any mould between the drills. All weeds may be removed by the hand, when the instrument cannot reach them, without injury to the plants. About the 6th of May, this crop will receive its last moulding.

We are now arrived at the very best season, upon an average of years, for

* The advantages of this mode of culture are obvious, the labour being performed in the autumn and winter, is less felt, and the farmer is made to have his crop planted in good time as he can then with ease put in one acre per day with each plough, the expense being comparatively trifling. The potato seed is not buried too deep for an early crop. The clods being pulverised, the seeds of weeds which were locked up begin to vegetate, and are eradicated by the after tillage.

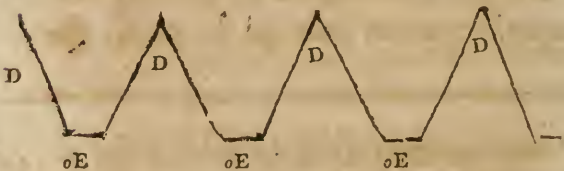
planting the main crop, whether red, black, or white potatoes. The field presents itself as in

No. 1.



B, the early plant growing; C, the bottom of the drill, formed by the plough. You are now to plant any of the above-mentioned seeds at C; the ploughman to follow with the drill-harrow, four of the coulters being removed. The field then presents itself as in

No. 2.



D, the early plant; E, the seed of the main crop.* About the middle of June

* This is simple management: two men will plant one acre per day, and one horse, with a lad of sixteen will cover

the first crop, if the right kind has been chosen, will be 'fit for use. Let the stocks be mowed, and the mould taken from each side of the drills with the plough, at least four days prior to your taking them out with grapes, which, if nicely performed, will give the latter crop a good moulding in proper time, and ripen the former sufficiently to bear the carriage to market. As soon as the plants appear above ground, run the drill-harrow and double-mould plough, as mentioned before. Repeat this every ten days, as long as you can get any mould to throw up. When the plants begin to flower, let the blossoms be carefully picked off, or turn a few goats into the field, one at

three sufficiently, with hardly a possibility of missing the right time for planting, and is it possible to have the land in higher tith? It has had the finest autumn, winter, and spring fallow, with the mould as fine as a garden, and almost every weed exterminated: every landing it receives is with rich friable earth, saturated with the steam of dung, and well calculated to produce largely.

least to the acre, and they will save you that trouble.*

This crop will be ripe by the latter end of October.

In cold, wet lands, strong clays, and in parts of the country distant from large towns, where a sale for early potatoes cannot be had, let those lands enjoy the full benefit of the fallow, and have one or two harrowings, when the dry north-east winds set in, to prepare them for planting the main crop, which should never be earlier than the 16th of April, or later than the 16th of May.

I beg to make a few comparisons between the present most improved plan, and that which I have submitted to your consideration.

* By thus destroying the seed in embryo, you increase the roots, without exhausting the land.

In the manner now generally adopted by the best farmers, the manure is drawn from the farm-yard, and formed into one or more large heaps, in the field intended for potatoes, and requires more labour to put it into those dung-hills than at once on the land. It ferments once, or sometimes, from increasing the quantity, two or three times, expending all its strength; is left there as a nursery for the eggs of flies, and food of those when hatched, and other vermin; is exposed to the sun and air, and almost all its virtues are exhaled. The grass and weeds that grow in the corn, are allowed to flourish unmolested in the autumn and winter; and in spring, when the farmer has business of more importance to attend to, he is obliged to give the ground two or three ploughings, with twice as many harrowings, to make it fine enough to form the drills. He is then obliged, at this busy season, to move the dung a second time, which, being put into the drills, only manures a small portion of

the land. The seed being placed on the dung, is almost sure to produce wet roots. The shoots soon leave the dung, and have nothing but raw earth to vegetate in, or rather feed on, The mould you land them with is no better. The seed being placed in the drills, which are generally deep, remains a long time before vegetation takes place, and, in wet springs, is often scalded and destroyed. The early crop is taken up in the hottest summer weather; of course, the dung is a third time exposed to the baneful effects of the atmosphere, and at the mercy of a cloud of insects. The mould is in a highly prepared state to receive the seeds of all weeds that are roving at large, looking for such a lodging: and what remains, if any, of the dung, is exhausted by this crop, which is generally abundant. Look at the fields in the neighbourhood of London and Dublin, in the month of October, that have produced early potatoes: what state are they in? Truly, a mass of weeds—and then

they are all ploughed down in the act of seeding, leaving the ground more foul than ever. But on the contrary, let us consider in what state that land must be, that has gone through the process I have taken the liberty to recommend. It has had fourteen months of the finest fallow; every weed exterminated. The first crop is planted in a warm bed, near the surface. The plough, in moulding, forms a drain to take off all superfluous moisture. The second crop is planted deep, in warm weather, therefore receives more mould, and trenches the land; the dung is equally diffused through all the earth; every time you mould, fresh vigour is given to the plant; the farther it shoots, the more nourishment it receives; and the roots will be dry, from having a dry bed.

As success in a great measure depends on the goodness of the seed, use that only which was perfectly ripe when dug out, and preserved from heating, frost,

and all other injury. I beg also to suggest the absolute necessity of planting the largest and most perfect of each kind: from their size they are difficult to boil, therefore unfit for table use.

I beg also strongly to recommend the use of the scoop. Let each set have but one eye or bud, and not be less than one inch in diameter...what is left will be valuable food, when steamed, for poultry, swine, and all descriptions of cattle: those balls, so scooped, being of equal size, can be planted by a bean-barrow, with one third of the labour, and more accuracy than by the hand. In fact, a hopper and wheel can be attached to a light plough, which at once opens the furrow, and plants the sets, reducing the labour to a mere trifle, one horse being sufficient, with a lad of sixteen, to plant an acre per day.

From the numerous kinds, and their affinity, each sort bearing twenty differ-

ent names, and every district having its favourite, it would be idle in me to attempt classing them, or point out the kind, or season, in which it is most proper for each to be planted. The potato that requires most time to come to perfection, ought certainly to be first planted, and may be depended upon to keep the longest and produce the best dish, when the early, I may say, all the white kinds, are unfit for use. The apple potato, well known in Ireland, will keep good until late in the month of July, and requires six months to bring it to perfection; it may be had at every sea-port town in the island.

It would be idle in me to expatiate on the vast benefit that would result to society, by cultivating this most valuable of all roots in the spirited manner it deserves: no crop will produce to man and beast so much good, wholesome food, from the square of the surface it occupies, or leaves the ground in finer order.

In 1812, a fair crop would have sold for more than would pay the fee-simple of the land.

THE END.

Newry, printed by A. Wilkinson.



✿ *The AUTHOR will, with pleasure,
furnish any agricultural instrument-maker
with a model or drawing of the potato
plough.*

